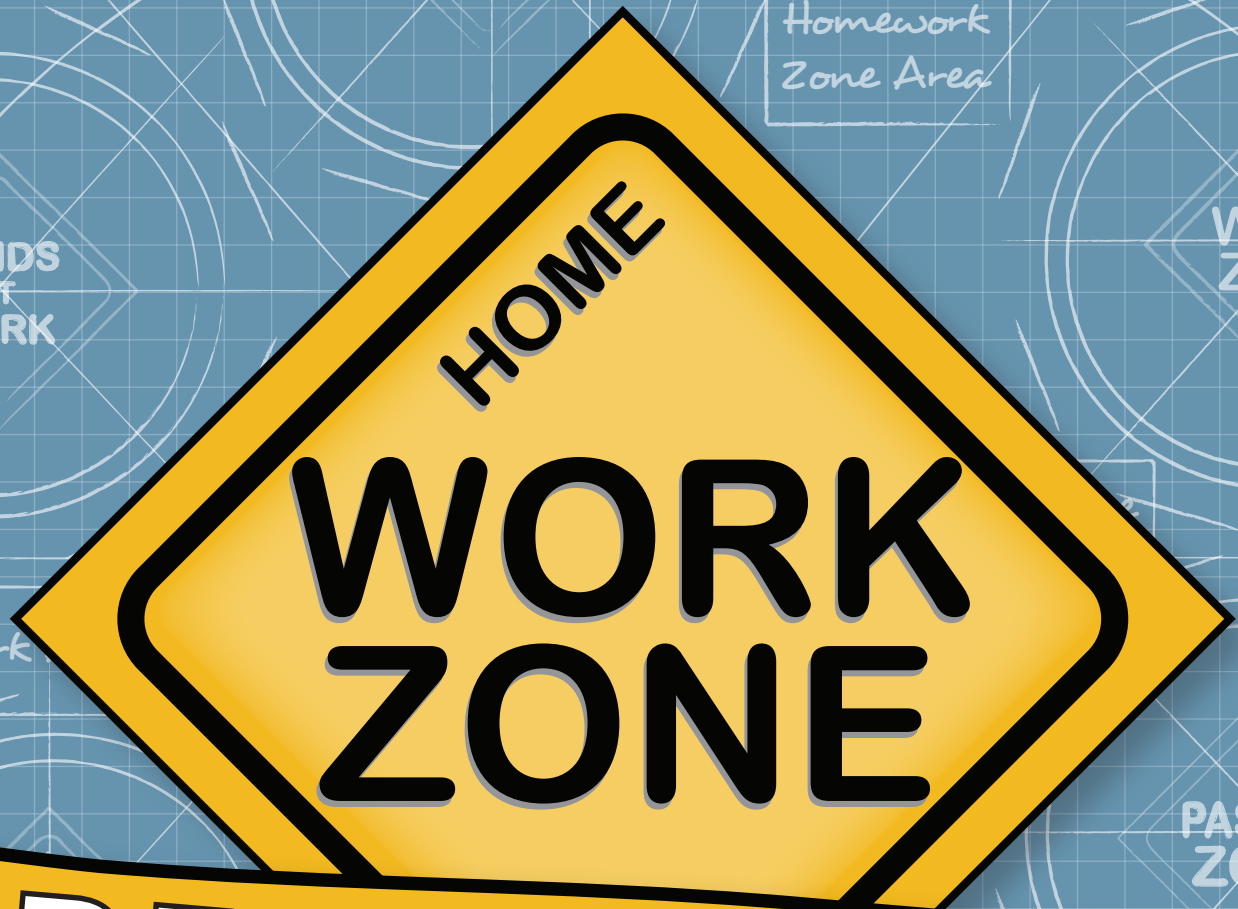


K PROGRAM PACK PROGR



OPERATIONS O  
IDE GUIDE GUID

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# The Homework Zone Works

## Students say...

*"...The Homework Zone has helped me get my assignments completed and has made it easier to get one-on-one help."*

*"...I am more confident with tests and quizzes..."*

*"...All my grades went up (math, science, English)..."*

*"...I got help in algebra and now I can graduate in June..."*

*"...I learned to use reference materials..."*

*"...I learned to research on the computer and to do graphs on Excel"*

*"I get to help younger students with their homework."*

*"I can work on homework with my friends."*

*"It's a place to be by myself, complete homework, and read my favorite book."*

*"Thank you for giving me a second chance."*

*"I feel as though I've made more friends at the Homework Zone. "*

## **Teachers say\*....**

*"The Homework Zone is wonderful. I sent students for help and they keep going back."*

*"It's great to see students interested in doing homework and getting better grades in school."*

*"Huge improvement in all of my students who attend the Homework Zone."*

*"Students have a deeper understanding of skills and are better prepared in class."*

*"...Great program. Builds confidence..."*

*"...Absolutely a needed resource in the urban setting!"*

*"There has been an overall change in students' attitudes and work habits."*

*"Students really enjoy the program and they're progressing academically and socially."*

*"Students feel a sense of belonging."*





OPERATIONS O  
IDE GUIDE GUID

CENTER FOR AFTERSCHOOL EDUCATION  
FOUNDATIONS, INC.

## **Acknowledgements**

At the Center for Afterschool Education, we learn by doing and from working with others. We're grateful to the tens of thousands of students in Philadelphia and Camden who taught us what works, and doesn't, for homework time in afterschool. We're grateful, too, to the school administrators, teachers, staff, and volunteers who made homework time in their schools a time for truly helping young people learn, grow, and succeed.

Development of the Homework Zone Program Pack took integrated team efforts across the Center for Afterschool Education and Foundations. Program designers, practitioners, writers, editors, production, and support staff worked together to create resources to help others make the most of homework time in afterschool.

Claudia Weisburd, Executive Director

Ron Goldstein

Nancy Reid

Jennifer Brevoort

Rhe McLaughlin

Production: Tina Melchiorre Cobar

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# HOMework TIME, AFTERSCHOOL STYLE

"Before I came here, I went to the gym or slept. Now I actually do my homework."  
—Homework Zone Student

MINDS  
AT  
WORK

Passing Zone  
Area

Minds at Work Area

HOME  
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PASSING  
ZONE

PASSING  
ZONE

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# INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

If homework time in your afterschool program is old-fashioned study hall—or worse—you and your students are missing a great opportunity.

Look at homework as time for learning afterschool style, not just dreaded task completion, and you'll make the shift to a positive, supportive, active learning space: the Homework Zone.

Imagine students working together on projects and helping each other with assignments. See yourself—or skilled Learning Coaches and tutors—pointing out reference books and websites, holding small group tutoring sessions, or running mini-lessons. Envision students reading on their own, or studying together for tests.

## The premises are straightforward

- Young people would rather do well than fail
- Many students do not have good work environments at home
- Afterschool can be a great work environment, with students working together, resources at hand, and supportive adults in a relaxed, but focused setting
- Homework time can build a range of essential work habits and social skills
- Students learn to make good decisions when they are given choices, and see positive results

Consider the impact when struggling or failing students see that that yes, they can succeed at schoolwork. That they can get their homework done, that they can study and pass tests. Consider what it means when students see that their efforts translate into better grades.

Turn ordinary homework time into Homework Zones, and give students the time, space, support, and skills to be good students across all their subjects.

### HOMework TIME, AFTERSCHOOL STYLE

- Learner-centered, with choice among work areas
- Active, engaged, and focused
- Fosters and builds positive relationships for students with adults and among peers
- Clear objectives of—and clear support for—success in school
- Provides resources for learning to be a successful student

# OBJECTIVES

## **Build skills for success in school**

The Homework Zone deliberately cultivates students' development as students.

It uses homework time to:

- Help young people take themselves seriously as students and responsible, independent learners
- Support 21st century skills of collaboration, teamwork, critical thinking, reading, writing, and communication
- Reinforce subject-based academic skills
- Build confidence, attitude, and behavioral skills that help students succeed across the school setting
- Expand communication among students, parents or guardians, and teachers

Skill-building during homework time can include:

- Keeping track of and understanding assignments
- Focusing on work for extended periods
- Working with others, whether peers, tutors, teachers, or other adults
- Studying for tests
- Test-taking
- Reading comprehension, fluency, and motivation
- Listening, following directions, note-taking
- Turning in work on time
- Communication and English language skills
- Time management
- Seeking and using help and resources
- Connecting effort with results

## **Create a working environment**

Learning to stay focused, think, and complete tasks—even when with friends—and to manage time, are critical skills for success in school, and into adulthood and the workplace.

The key to developing this skill set is creating an active work space. Students choose which areas of schoolwork to focus on—homework, studying, reading, skill-building Clinics—and whether to work on their own, on computers (if available), or with friends, teachers, or tutors. They can work on daily homework or longer term assignments, practice for tests, or do their reading.

Students should be able to move about freely to work in different ways for different purposes at different times. You should hear the Zone at work, with students talking and working together. Don't be afraid to give students this leeway—it works! Being with friends is very important to young people. You'll often see friends working next to each other, focused on different assignments.



Environment matters. It sends a message of expectations. The Homework Zone should communicate confidence in students' ability to make good decisions and to take responsibility for their learning.

### **Foster a culture of caring**

Think of the homework zone as more like doing homework at home with friends, with a parent around to help out here and there, keep things on track, and establish the expectation that the work will get done, and get done well. Learning Coaches are charged not only with supporting students in specific homework tasks. They are also called upon to create an environment of caring, support, and high expectations.

Students see this and feel it—and it is motivating. One student, when asked, “Should the Homework Zone program continue next year?” replied, “Yes, the teachers are like a family to me.” Another said: “I feel good about my relationship with the teachers; we fuss, we disagree, but I know they really care about what happens to me...”

A Learning Coach echoed the sentiment: “This is like an extended family, a social network of friendly faces and helpful, accepting people.” This aspect of the Homework Zone—providing a student-centered, comfortable working environment—is especially important for younger students. It helps them build and maintain successful work patterns and develop caring support networks.

How does it happen?

- Students are respected as able to make choices and regulate their behavior
- Adults facilitate learning by providing resources and options for different kinds and patterns of work
- Adults communicate with teachers and parents in support of positive growth and learning, not for punitive reasons
- Young people are allowed to ‘be themselves’ in their developmental stage

### **Partner with parents and schools**

Young people thrive when all the adults in their lives collaborate in the interests of seeing children succeed. The Homework Zone structures communication with parents, teachers, and school administrators to form networks of support.

Parents are made aware of the opportunities available through the Homework Zone, and praise and recognition is shared when their children put in the effort to improve. Teachers are notified when their students attend, and are alerted when students need more help or review. School administrators are kept abreast of attendance patterns and effects on the school overall.

# HOMEWORK ZONE KEY ELEMENTS

Establishing and operating a Homework Zone is not complicated, but it does call for a shift. Staff become active Learning Coaches, supporting students' development and their educational success. Young people take responsibility. Classroom teachers and school administrators see homework time in afterschool as a meaningful opportunity.

Subsequent sections explain step-by-step how to set up and operate a Homework Zone. Core elements include:

**An active space** where students can move around into work areas or zones.

**Zones**, or work areas:

- **Homework area:** the basic homework space with texts, supplies, and tutoring or homework help.
- **Passing Zone:** the place for 20-minute skills clinics, studying, and test prep.
- **Minds at Work:** the area with reading materials, research references, and activities such as chess, Uno, Boggle, or *GraffitiWall*\*.

**Staff** as Learning Coaches who understand their role as active, engaged, and caring supporters of young people's learning, development and skill building.

**A schedule** that fits youth needs, program goals, requirements, and resources.

**Materials and supplies** that help young people do their work well.

**Processes and structures** to help students work and build skills, including Clinics, appropriate forms, tracking assignments as a group, and scheduling tutors for small group sessions.

**Student recruitment** strategies and activities.

**Follow up and communication** strategies with school teachers, administrators, and parents.

\* *GraffitiWall* is available from the Center for Afterschool Education. [www.afterschooled.org](http://www.afterschooled.org)

## → THE HOMEWORK ZONE GETS RESULTS

Across 15 low-performing high schools in Philadelphia, PA, teachers and students in the Homework Zone saw results. As a drop-in program, attendance increased each year, tripling in three years of operation. Students brought friends. Teachers recommended it. Why? Because it worked.

- 80% of students said they recommended the Homework Zone to their friends.
- Student visits increased by 73% between the second and third year of operation, demonstrating the emergence of a school culture where students choose to get the extra academic support.
- 63% of the students either maintained or improved their school attendance.

Students expressed clearly what worked for them: a place to work and study that was also relaxed and supportive academically and socially.

"The Homework Zone gave me a safe place to go after school where I can work on my assignments and projects. I also get a chance to meet other students in my school."

"It's like a family."

"I never did homework before, now I do it every day."

"I feel as though I've made more friends at the Homework Zone."

"I can work on homework with my friends."

"I get to help younger students with their homework."

Students gained specific skills and saw the outcomes.

"The Homework Zone helped me develop test-taking skills."

"...I am more confident with tests and quizzes..."

"...All my grades went up (math, science, English)..."

"...I got help in algebra and now I can graduate in June..."

"...I learned to use reference materials..."

"...I learned to research on the computer and to do graphs on MS Excel..."

Classroom teachers saw results, too.

- 89% of classroom teachers surveyed\* indicated that more students completed their homework assignments
- 91% reported that Homework Zone students attempted more homework assignments
- 86% reported that students improved their work habits
- 84% reported that students improved report card grades

Positive results were also seen on school-wide standardized test scores. Between 2003-04, the 15 Philadelphia high schools offering Homework Zone had greater improvement in test scores than the 24 non-participating high schools. Stronger performance showed across grades and subjects; in the percentage of students scoring above the national norm in the 9th and 10th grade reading and math TerraNova scores; and in the percentage of students scoring proficient/advanced in the 11th grade reading and math PSSA.

\* Surveys were administered to classroom teachers, learning coaches, students, and administrators between April 24 and May 8, 2006. Analysis was based on survey returns from 301 classroom teachers, 444 students, 15 administrators and 38 Homework Zone teachers. Students and learning coaches also participated in focus groups.

# HOW TO USE THE HOMEWORK ZONE PROGRAM PACK CD SET

The Homework Time Program Pack provides the guidance and tools for starting and running a successful Homework Zone program. The CD format lets you customize the Homework Zone to fit your students, your resources, and your needs.



## CD 1 Homework Zone: Set Up and Go

Operations Guide with step-by-step instructions for planning and launching a Homework Zone

Operations forms (customizable), including sign-in sheets and student guides

Recruitment, outreach, and communications templates (customizable)

Evaluation surveys

**Professional  
Development  
PowerPoint®**

Getting started with  
the Homework Zone



## CD 2 Extend the Learning

Clinics Guide, with 25 20-minute skill-building mini-lessons (with activity handouts) for reading comprehension, test-taking, and other cross-subject school skills. Clinics are adapted for use at three reading levels, offering a targeted skill-building option during Homework Zone time.

Card Twisters, easy-to-make math activities to play with cards (or slips of paper) numbered 1 through 9.

Student study skills handouts, including notes on test-taking, test-prep, and note-taking



**Make your own binder** with binder cover, spine, and back cover for easy printing and referencing of the materials and tools you need for your program



**Online support** Send an email to [hzinfo@foundationsinc.org](mailto:hzinfo@foundationsinc.org) to get a password and instructions for accessing the Homework Zone online discussion board

## Additional resources

for homework time available from the Center for Afterschool Education at Foundations, Inc.

*GraffitiWall*

*Global GraffitiWall*

*Celebrate Success RFP Project:  
Math and English in Action for  
Upper Grades*

*Academic Content, Afterschool  
Style: A Notebook and Guide*

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# BUILDING A HOMEWORK ZONE

*"With the help of Homework Zone, I have been able to get higher scores on my tests and higher grades on my report card..."*  
—Homework Zone Student

Lead time and budget 13

School contacts 14

Schedule 14

Staff 15

Space 17

Supplies, resources, and materials 19

Attendance, rules, expectations,  
and incentives 21

Student recruitment 24

Communication with parents and teachers 25

Evaluation and data collection 27

ends at Work Area

HOME  
WORK  
ZONE

Homework  
Zone Area

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# BUILDING A HOMEWORK ZONE

Planning is essential to building an effective, high quality program. Prior to opening, use this checklist and the following information to plan the program that best fits your students and resources.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lead time and budget                    | <input type="checkbox"/> School contacts                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Schedule                                | <input type="checkbox"/> Staffing                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Space                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Supplies, resources and materials |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Attendance, rules, and expectations     | <input type="checkbox"/> Student recruitment               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communication with teachers and parents | <input type="checkbox"/> Evaluation and data collection    |

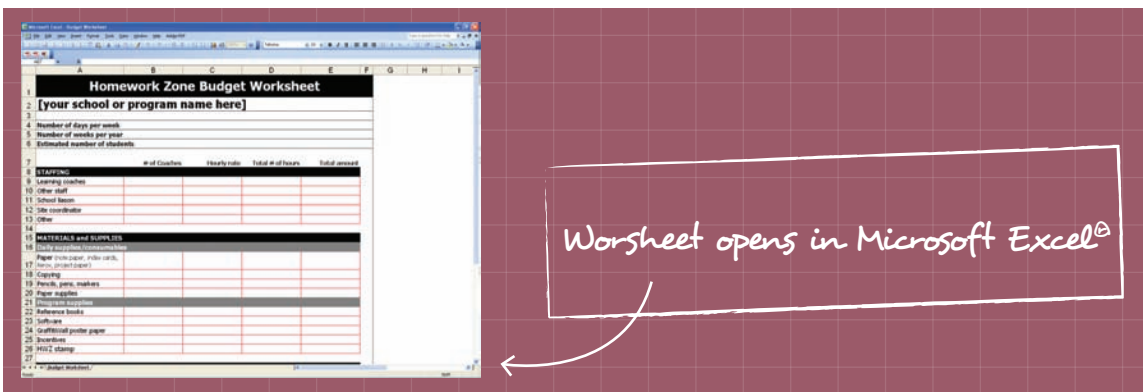
## LEAD TIME AND BUDGET

If you have an existing afterschool program, you may be able to get the Homework Zone up and running in as little as two weeks. For a new program, allocate at least four weeks to hire and train staff, organize the location, order necessary materials, promote the program, and recruit students. If you have enough help, steps can be taken simultaneously.

To create a budget, determine how long the program will run, the number of days per week, and the estimated number of students. Use that as a basis for calculating expenses.

- Learning Coaches: Assume a staffing level of one adult per twenty middle or high school students; try to make it 1:15 or better, if possible.
- Other personnel: Factor in costs for a liaison with the school, or other supports, as needed
- Student costs: Calculate the cost of consumable materials (paper, pencils, markers), computer software, and purchased incentives. Estimate how much you might spend per student or per day.
- Meeting expenses, celebrations

» **Click here** for a worksheet to get started with budgeting.



Sources of funding may include the school district's afterschool budget or student tuition. You may include the Homework Zone as part of a 21st Century Community Learning Center grant, or seek other government or private support. Businesses or large corporations may be good sources, making it 'their' afterschool homework program, particularly if you use their name in outreach. Businesses may be able to provide supports in the form of materials and supplies, or volunteers.

# SCHOOL CONTACTS

In the early planning stages, address how you will communicate and work with your school or the schools your students attend. Strong support from school administrators is essential in student recruitment, communication with teachers, evaluation, and smooth operations. Build relationships with school principals and assistant principals to get them on board.

It helps to explain the benefits to school administrators in terms of how it will help the school achieve overall goals, with points such as:

- Providing support through critical middle school and 9th grade transitions
- Developing good work and study habits across subjects
- The importance of additional adult involvement, help and encouragement
- The value of providing a safe work space, which many students lack at home
- Class grades improve
- Teachers appreciate the support for classwork, and see the benefits for students
- Students more readily participate in test prep and studying
- Homework Zone Learning Coaches reinforce communications with parents

Pay attention to the need for ongoing communication with school administrators, staff, and teachers, particularly if you are located in the school building. Agree on goals and processes; clarify expectations among all participants.

Logistical, shared space, and operational issues will come up, you'll want to talk with teachers, you may want to share resources and data. Build and maintain open lines of communication.

## SCHEDULE

The Homework Zone may stand on its own as an afterschool "service" for students on a drop-in basis, or it may be incorporated into an existing comprehensive afterschool program as the homework time.

For secondary students, it is helpful to have the Homework Zone open and available at least 1 ½ hours per day, four days per week. By high school, students often have heavy homework loads, and the Homework Zone should be providing a reliable opportunity for getting the work done.

If the Homework Zone is one part of a comprehensive program, schedule an amount of time in balance with other components.

# STAFF

The Homework Zone is staffed by Learning Coaches. You may also designate tutors to work with individuals or small groups; these may be subject matter teachers, college students, or peer tutors.

In a large or multi-site program, consider designating a staff person as site coordinator or liaison with the school. In a smaller program, school liaison functions can be part of the Learning Coach duties.

All staff should be part of orientation and appropriate training and professional development for their work in the Homework Zone.

## • Learning Coaches

Learning Coaches commit to helping young people succeed in school, with the recognition that success hinges on a range of social, emotional, and academic needs and skills. Coaches encourage, they show they care, they show their belief in students' abilities. Effective Coaches put youth at the center of the Homework Zone, understanding that young people have complex lives, different working and learning styles, different interests, and different skill levels and needs.

Coaches help students work and learn on their own or with friends, and steer students toward appropriate levels of support. Some students need more intensive small group or one-on-one tutoring. Others may need a bit of help in some subjects or with some tasks, while others just need space, supplies, and time. The Homework Zone allows students to work independently, and to find the help that is needed.

Learning Coaches may be drawn from the ranks of certified teachers, paraprofessionals, college students, volunteers, and students themselves, who can serve as "peer assistant coaches." The key is having Coaches provide the kind of help and support they are qualified to provide, such as.

- Circulate and use helping strategies
- Encourage and support students—just as an involved parent would!
- Point out and help with resources
- Read with students and talk about readings
- Help with test prep and studying
- Listen to students' reports and papers and give feedback
- Engage with activities such as GraffitiWall
- Help with current assignments

## ZONE FUNCTIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- Create a focused, supportive, learner-centered work environment with clear expectations
- Build positive peer and student-adult relationships
- Set up Zones and resources
- Provide different levels of help
- Manage operations
  - Attendance logs
  - Incentives
  - Supplies
  - Data collection
  - Reporting
- Recruit students
- Encourage steady attendance
- Promote varied activities
- Tutor as appropriate
- Oversee tutoring
- Communicate with teachers and parents
- Encourage attendance

If college students or certified teachers are available, they are best used to also run small group or one-on-one tutoring, and to provide advanced, subject-specific help.

- **Tutors**

For subject-specific tutoring, tap the knowledge and expertise of teachers or college students. Adult volunteers can also serve as tutors, and may provide tutoring in general skills—such as literacy—rather than class or subject specific tutoring. Advanced students may also be able to provide tutoring. In some schools, students can earn community service or service-learning credit for tutoring.

Be sure that volunteer and student tutors receive an orientation to tutoring. It is important that they know what to expect, and have some core techniques at hand. See that tutors—especially peers, college students, or volunteers—have ongoing supervision and support, especially in tutors' first months on the job. Section 4 offers tutoring tips and strategies that can form the basis of tutor training and orientation.

- **Operations management staff**

Identify staff responsible for management oversight, and for communication with the schools or centers. In larger programs, you may want to create one position specifically responsible for management.

Responsibilities and functions include:

- Working with schools around space assignments and use
- Partnering with teachers and administrators for student recruitment
- Data collection (including acquiring data from schools)
- Communication with classroom teachers about student progress or other issues (via bulletin boards, notices, or other means)
- Snacks
- Learning Coach support
- Tutor training and orientation
- Ensuring supply of materials
- Interface with security
- Computer management
- Orienting and managing volunteers
- Securing donations from local businesses
- Publicizing the program
- Reporting

These functions may be assumed by a Learning Coach, or divided among various staff. The key is to plan and clarify roles and responsibilities.

# SPACE

## In school and out-of-school settings

Homework Zones may be set up in schools, community centers, libraries, or any afterschool site with enough space and flexibility to create an active (sometimes somewhat noisy) learning environment for individuals, pairs, triads, small groups, and large groups.

In schools, the library or media center is often ideal for the Homework Zone, especially if it has computers. Locating the Homework Zone in the library gets more students to come to the library and learn what's there. In one library-based program in Philadelphia, PA, many students said they were using the library for the first time.

If a library or similar facility is not available and you must use a classroom, try to get a large classroom, or adjacent rooms, so students can still move around into different work spaces.

Settings outside of schools may allow more flexibility in organizing and using space. You may have more opportunities to engage students in arranging the furniture and the Zones, and establishing rules about, for example, snacks, music, noise, and use of materials or computers. You may be able to bring in bean bag chairs or carpets to allow students to work on the floor. You may be able to use the walls for activities, and to display student work. If you have this flexibility, make the most of it!

Whichever space you use, be sure understandings are clear among staff, teachers, administrators, or center leaders about rules on aspects such as food, furniture, walls, materials, and clean-up.

## Work areas

Ideally, the Homework Zone is set up with several work areas for different work styles and activities. Zones should be distinguished visually so students see that there are distinct choices. Signs on the tables or posted on the wall, clearly different materials, or furniture arranged in groups or for individual work all delineate areas. Music playing in one area and not another also helps distinguish the spaces.

Typically, the main Homework Zone area is somewhat quieter—but not silent!—for individual, small group, or one-on-one tutoring. The Passing Zone is noisier, with students studying and quizzing each other for tests, talking about readings, sharing notes, and participating in skills Clinics. If your program has a lot of English language learners (ELL students), you should encourage talking as much as possible, so plan accordingly.

**SPACE SHARING**

Space is often a major issue for afterschool programs in schools.

Talk to school administrators, teachers and custodial staff to establish:

- ☐ Use of materials—yours and theirs
- ☐ Moving furniture
- ☐ Use of wall space
- ☐ Displaying student work
- ☐ Clean up
- ☐ Rules about food and drink
- ☐ Trash handling
- ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

To the greatest extent possible, involve students in organizing the area and establishing rules. Working with space and rules is an excellent way to engage students of all ages in a project that practices group processes, builds ownership, and ensures that the space best fits student needs and work styles. Make it a full-group or committee project at the beginning of the year, or set up a student committee during the planning phase.

## **Storage**

Identify where Homework Zone materials and supplies will be stored at the end of each day. It's helpful to pack the materials for each Zone in a separate box so they can be distributed and collected easily. If storage is some distance away, try to find a rolling cart—or a few strong students!

## **Wall space**

Try to secure dedicated wall space or a bulletin board in the Homework Zone room and in a faculty lounge or meeting room.

In the Homework Zone, use wall space to:

- Post a rotation of activities and projects such as GraffitiWall, student reviews of TV shows, music, or books, or surveys
- Display student work, announcements, and recognitions
- Recruit students
- Post Clinics topics and sign-ups
- Create a notice board for community events, information about services, or jobs

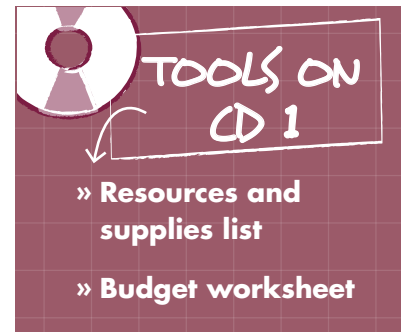
In a faculty area, establish a “Notes from the Zone” bulletin board for communicating with teachers and displaying student work to let teachers know what students in the Zone are doing.

# SUPPLIES, RESOURCES AND MATERIALS

## Supplies

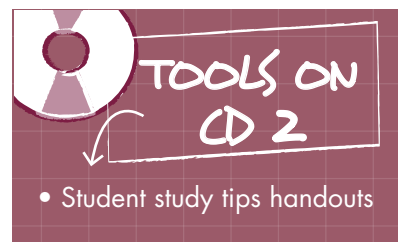
Equip the Zone with basic supplies for completing homework well.

- Assignment books
- Calculators, including scientific and graphing calculators
- Pencils, pens
- Colored markers, highlighters
- Lined paper, graph paper, construction paper
- Index cards
- Scissors, paper clips, staplers



## References and resources

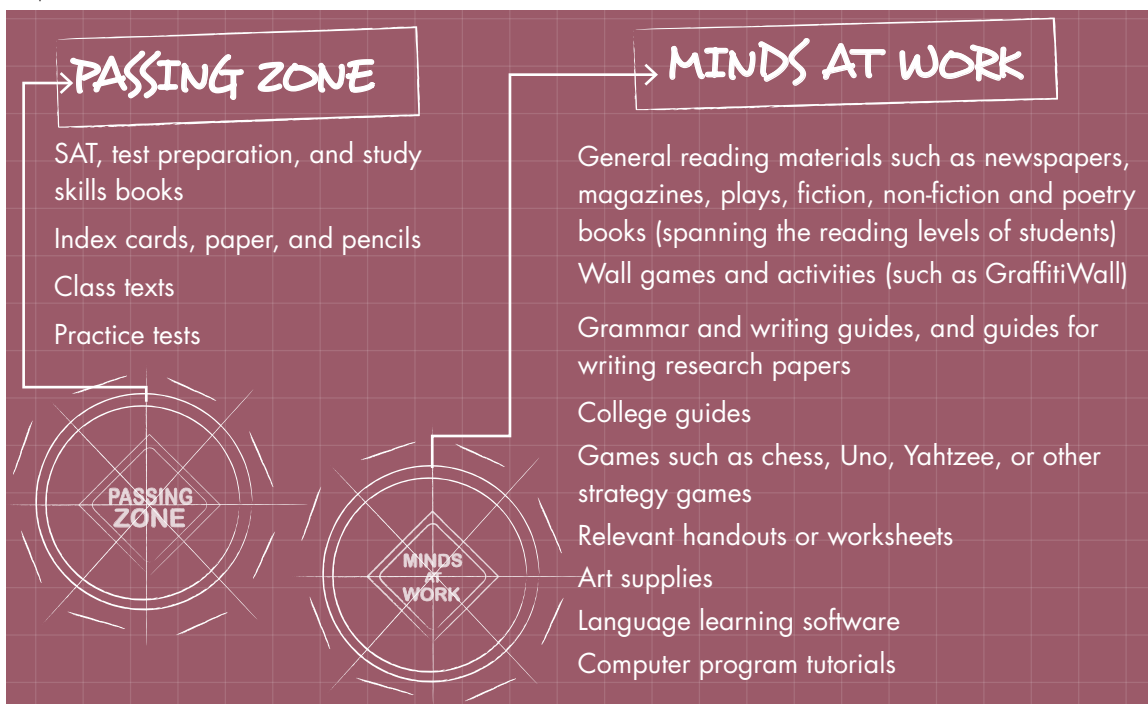
Reference books, study guides, and computers are standard, daily Homework Zone resources. Successful students and independent learners know how to use resources, and it is up to the Learning Coach to support development of this skill. Even if it seems that the reference books may not be heavily used, they should be readily available and visible (especially if computers are limited).



Include references such as

- Class textbooks
- Math reference books
- Dictionary, thesaurus (including bilingual and/or ELL dictionaries)
- Atlas, encyclopedia, almanac
- List of useful websites if computers are available

Prepare resources for each area.



# HOMEWORK ZONE RESOURCES AND SUPPLIES LIST

Check which of these you have and what you need to get.

## GENERAL REFERENCES

HAVE GET

Dictionary, thesaurus

Atlas, almanac, encyclopedia

Picture dictionaries (e.g., *The Oxford Picture Dictionary: Monolingual Edition* or one of the bilingual editions)

## SUBJECT-SPECIFIC REFERENCES AND MATERIALS

Math (e.g., *Math on Call*, *Algebra to Go*, *Geometry to Go*)

Math class textbooks

English class textbooks and readings

Writing guides (e.g., *Write Your Research Paper*)

ELL games and activities (e.g., *Vocabulary Games for Intermediate English Language Learners*, *Solo*, *Duo*, *Trio: Puzzles and Games for Building English Language Skills*)

General interest reading materials Consider students' ages, interests, and what they are studying in class. Include non-fiction and magazines such as *Time for Kids*

Test preparation and study skills (e.g., *10 Real SAT's*, *Up Your Score: The Underground Guide to the SAT*, *Guide to Study Skills and Strategies*, *Survival Guide for Students*)

Science (e.g., *Oxford Dictionary of Science*)

Other

## LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Chess

Checkers, Dominoes

Boggle, Uno, Yahtzee, Blockus, or similar strategy games

GraffitiWall

Art supplies; computer graphics software

Computer-based games, learning programs

Other

## SUPPLIES

Calculators

Pencils, pens

Rulers, scissors

Index cards

Assignment books

Papers

Markers, highlighters

Stapler, paper clips

Incentive awards

Other



# ATTENDANCE, RULES, EXPECTATIONS, AND INCENTIVES

## Attendance

Homework Zones may be run on a drop-in or enrollment basis. Enrollment programs offer benefits of:

- Allowing long term relationships to develop between Coaches and students
- Providing options for more complex projects conducted over time
- Creating opportunities for student leadership
- Simplified attendance data collection
- Easier fit with some funding streams

A disadvantage is that enrollment may be low and/or attrition high if students need to commit to program schedules they can't maintain. At the secondary level, all programs are de-facto drop-in. Making the Homework Zone drop-in deliberately can turn the negative of erratic or low student attendance into a positive.

Drop-in programs offer:

- A better fit with the reality of secondary students' busy schedules
- Greater reach as a 'service' used on an as-needed basis
- Avoiding the potential for failure if students do not meet enrollment attendance requirements
- Giving students the choice of assuming control over their learning—just crossing the threshold is a successful decision!
- Reinforcing time management and decision-making
- Helping to create a school culture of high expectations coupled with support to meet them

Experience with thousands of students has shown that drop-in works to meet diverse needs. Typically, attendance patterns form, with the great majority of students in the first three groups.

- A strong core group with students attending three or more days per week for the entire year
- A group that attends one or two days per week, most of the year
- Students who show up when projects or longer term assignments are due, or when preparing for tests
- Students who attend very sporadically

### SAMPLE SCHEDULE

for drop-in program serving secondary students

#### 3:00 – 3:20

Doors open, students sign in, new students pick up *Student Guide to the Zone* handout and Zone Points card

#### 3:00 – 5:00

Students work on homework and projects, study, etc. Coaches circulate and offer help when asked or when they see it is needed

#### 3:20

Announce and begin a Clinic in the Passing Zone for students who choose it (maximum 12 students). During the Clinic, other students continue their work

#### 4:00

Optional Dismissal 1 (for students with other extracurricular activities)

#### 4:20

Repeat the Clinic, if warranted

#### 4:45

Remind students to gather their belongings and return materials

#### 4:50

Sign-out, stamp or initial Zone Point cards, turn in filled Zone Point cards

#### 5:00

Dismissal for remaining students

The more steadily-attending core groups can form the basis for some of the longer-term projects or activities that might be organized in an enrollment program, such as committees, leadership development, or community-based or extended learning projects.

Disadvantages of the drop-in model include more challenges in data collection, prevailing beliefs about students' ability to choose, communicating more complex objectives and processes, and possibly the need to realign reporting with funding streams.

Drop-in programs require specific planning for student traffic flows, both for security reasons as well as to ensure a meaningful amount of time in the Zones. Strategies that work:

- Keep a "doors open" policy for the first 15 minutes after the last class
- 'Close the doors' at a designated time (and make it known)
- Establish two dismissal times, about an hour apart

## Sign-in/sign-out

Whether for security, funding, evaluation, or general good practice reasons, you need to know who is in the program each day, and, preferably, for how long. The system may be as simple as sign-in, sign-out sheets, or as sophisticated as swipe cards or biometrics.

Decide in advance and put the pieces and processes in place to keep the records and collect the data you need.

## Rules and expectations

As much as possible, develop rules and expectations with student participation.

Be clear that the Homework Zone is a work space, then decide policies and rules with respect to:

- Start-up and transition in. Establish processes for coming into the Homework Zone and getting to work. You may use the Homework Tracker or similar group check-in system, or simply establish that once students sign in, they move into Zones to begin work. For a more phased transition, you can post GraffitiWalls and/or have table top activities out (brain teasers, puzzles, math activities with cards, etc.) for the first ten minutes. Arrange a signal for shifting into homework zones for tutoring, homework assignments, test prep, and other school work.

### MORE THAN JUST ATTENDANCE

**Sign-in and sign-out processes and logs can do more than simply track attendance—they can help support learning.**

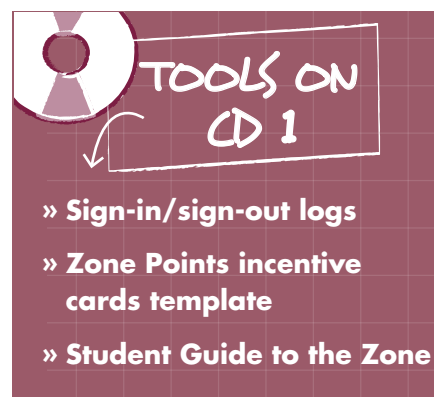
The attendance log template in the Program Pack includes a section where students indicate whether they completed their homework or want more review of a topic. Students develop the habit of reflecting on their learning and progress.

Logs are shared with teachers, so teachers can see who is attending, and who wants additional help.

For evaluation and program monitoring purposes, the log also shows how many students are attending from each grade.

- Noise. Not all noise is bad, and the Zone doesn't have to be library quiet. Tutoring, teamwork, peer supports, test practice, and discussion are all part of learning in the Zones. So is learning to be with friends in a relaxed environment, and still focus on work.

Students have different learning styles, however, and work best in different environments. Some need quiet; many adolescents prefer some noise. See what works best with your students, create different noise rules for different areas, and involve students in the decisions.



- Music and headphones. Related to noise is the question of music—available to all, restricted to individual headsets, or not at all?
- Snacks and food. Combining food with work works well in many ways, but can also be a problem with computers, books and materials, and cleanliness of the space overall. The owner of the space may have food rules you need to adhere to (such as no food in the library, or only in designated areas). Develop rules that protect resources—computers, drinks, and chips really do not belong together, for example—and also recognize the need to snack. Recognize, too, that snacks can be a great incentive to attend.
- Cell phones and cameras
- Processes and procedures around sign-in, sign-out, and general behavior

Create a short Student Guide, and put out a stack daily. (See sample and reproducible template *Student Guide to the Zone*).

## Incentives

Consider whether incentives might be useful as part of a recruitment strategy, to encourage consistent attendance, or as rewards or recognitions. Many schools and programs use incentives and find them effective. Others believe incentives do not encourage students, and may be counter-productive.

The Homework Zone program in Philadelphia used a Zone Points system.

- All students were given Zone Points cards, set up like coffee club cards, with space for five stamps and the student's name (customizable template provided in this Pack)
- Students had their cards stamped when they attended a full session
- Completed cards (five stamps or points) were turned in to the Coach
- At the end of the month, all cards were placed into a drawing for prizes such as calculators, books, or CD cases. (Depending on budget, you may have multiple prizes and drawings.)
- Parents were sent 'Good News!' postcards when students accumulated ten points (attended ten times and filled two cards)

Other Homework Zone programs have used Zone Points in ways that recognize all students for achieving a level of steady attendance.

- Redeeming points at a school or Homework Zone store
- Awarding no-cost benefits such as privileges, or leadership in choices such as music or snacks for a period of time
- Distributing items donated from businesses
- Free (donated) tickets to shows or events

Snacks and food are powerful incentives for attendance, and yes, better snacks matter! Tying regular attendance to leadership opportunities is also a successful strategy. Regular attendees can take leadership of special events, such as planning field trips, guest speakers, or parties.

Even in programs with incentives, however, it is clear that the greatest motivators for students—which underlie the most consistent attendance—are working with friends in a comfortable environment, relationships with caring adults, and seeing the results in success. Build and promote these first and foremost.

## STUDENT RECRUITMENT

Recruiting secondary students to a schoolwork program is a marketing campaign! If the Homework Zone is embedded in a wider program, there may be no distinct recruitment. If it is a stand-alone however, creating the right message and getting it out there is essential.

Choose techniques that will best reach and motivate your population. (Customizable templates for flyers and postcards are included on this CD.)

*Recognize that satisfied customers—students—are your best recruiters! In addition:*

### **Recruitment with teachers and schools**

- Get teachers on board and have them promote it in class
- Ask teachers to mention the Homework Zone as a resource when assigning projects or announcing tests
- Encourage teachers to assign group projects and assignments that can be worked on in the Homework Zone
- Arrange for extra credit from classroom teachers based on students' work or attendance in the Homework Zone
- Create service learning opportunities for peer tutors or jobs for advanced students
- Work with the sports team coaches to link practice and homework time
- Ask school principals to announce the Zone program regularly, giving time and location
- Provide appreciations and awards to teachers and schools for increasing attendance in the Homework Zone

## **Recruiting students**

- Put up a large, bold banner over the door
- Get out jazzy promotional flyers—preferably student-made
- Run a poster contest for students, and use the poster all over the school or community center
- Post and distribute flyers where students gather
- Provide snacks, and let it be known
- Hold monthly pizza parties
- Play music during the first 15 minutes so students passing by can hear it
- Make logo tee-shirts, pencils, pens, highlighters, or other give-aways—for students and teachers!

## **Recruitment through parents**

- Let parents know there's an opportunity for FREE academic support for their children
- Enclose notices with report cards
- Present at faculty and parent meetings
- Make information available at parent-teacher conferences
- Include announcements in parent newsletters
- Invite parents into the Zones as helpers, staff, presenters, and project leaders

# **COMMUNICATION WITH TEACHERS AND PARENTS**

The Homework Zone is a hub of support for students—which includes forming a network with teachers and parents. Deliberately cultivate communications to help with recruitment, and, most important, to strengthen the learning.

## **Teachers as partners**

The Homework Zone is a valuable resource for teachers. Teachers can assign and hold expectations for homework in full confidence that students have the space and materials to do the work. They can create group assignments or assignments around specific resources. Let teachers know what the Homework Zone offers them, and clarify expectations. Be clear that the Homework Zone can't guarantee completion or accuracy of homework, but it can guarantee solid support. Provide lists of the resources and supplies available, spend time developing relationships with teachers to find out what students are doing in school, and make it clear that the Homework Zone is there to help all children and young people succeed in school.

'Notes from the Zone' is one strategy to structure communication with teachers in support of student learning. Create a 'Notes from the Zone' section of a teacher bulletin board or website to post:

- Daily sign-in/out logs, to show teachers which students are attending, and who would like additional help
- Homework Zone hours, location, and resources available (including staff and tutoring)
- A list of upcoming skills Clinics
- A suggestion envelope for teachers to leave comments, recommendations, or notes
- A Notes Pool envelope for teachers to contribute study notes to the Passing Zone
- Questions, concerns, or insights from students
- Completed work, activities, or GraffitiWalls to show what students are doing in the program

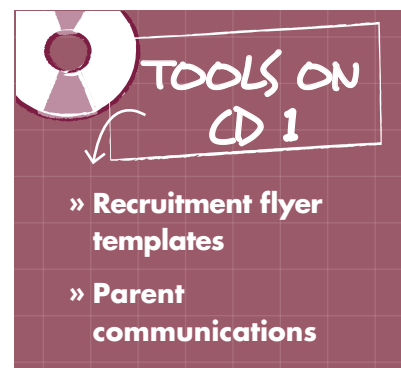
If Learning Coaches are aware of particular ongoing needs or issues with individual students, open communication processes and relationships with teachers allow the development of more targeted supports.

If Coaches are not school teachers, or do not have a school teaching background, they need to be sensitive to overall school culture and their position within it. The principal and teachers are typically the 'host' to afterschool programs, who are seen as 'guests.' The school is focused on academics; afterschool typically has a mix of objectives. Consequently, in-school and afterschool educators may have different approaches and priorities. Everyone, though, has the interests of the children and young people at heart. All are doing their best to help children succeed. Mutual respect—and admiration!—should always be clear.

## Parents and guardians as partners

Homework assignments are a window for parents into children's schoolwork. Communication from the Homework Zone helps keep parents and guardians informed about what students are working on, and shows parents that their children are putting effort into schoolwork.

- Invite parents and guardians to the Homework Zone on a regular basis
- Send Good News! postcards (customizable template provided) or similar communication to let parents know when their students are attending the Homework Zone
- Send in information to (or participate in) parent-teacher conferences
- Support parent involvement in college awareness, college prep (such as SAT tests), and application and funding processes
- Have student committees create celebrations or events and invite parents



# EVALUATION AND DATA COLLECTION

As basic good practice, track daily attendance. Depending on your funding and reporting requirements, you may need to track individual student attendance. This may be accomplished through sign-in sheets, roll-calls, various computer-based systems (including swipe cards and biometrics), combinations of these, or other strategies.

For program evaluation purposes, collect data related to the objectives and outcomes you target. Data to indicate establishment of a school culture and expectation around schoolwork, and support for transitions, for example, can include aggregate information such as:

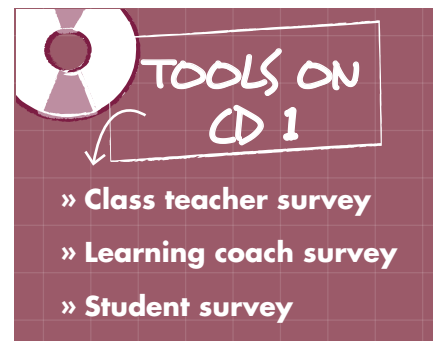
- Total number of student visits from each grade, tracked over two years
- Total number of Homework Zone visits, tracked over several years
- Teacher surveys reflecting quantity of homework turned in, or attitudes
- Promotions
- Number of students attending frequently (can be collected via number of students turning in Zone Points cards)

Improved work habits may be reflected in:

- Logs that track time on task or homework completion
- Contracts
- Journals
- School attendance
- Teacher surveys
- Student surveys

Academic performance can be seen in:

- Class grades
- Promotion and graduation
- Teacher surveys
- Student surveys
- Portfolios of work
- Credit earned



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# OPERATING THE HOMEWORK ZONE

"Homework Zone is very beneficial to both students and teachers. I love it."  
—Classroom Teacher

## Core Operations

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## Conducting Learning and Skill-Building Activities During Homework Time

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ends at Work Area

HOME  
WORK  
ZONE

Homework  
Zone Area

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# CORE OPERATIONS

## BASICS FOR OPENING

### Before the doors open

- Prepare all materials and supplies in advance
- Put up the banner
- Bring in Zone materials (supplies, reference materials, etc.)
- Put out the sign-in/sign-out logs (or other attendance tracking)
- Place a pile of "Student Guide to the Zone" handouts near the entrance
- If you are using Zone Points cards or similar, make a stack of them available
- Write the topic of the day's Zone Clinic on the board or post it on a piece of paper. Note the Clinic's starting time and its location if it is in a separate room
- Put out Clinic sign-in sheets
- Prepare and have ready Clinic handouts

### Differentiate and equip the Zones

Designate areas for different types of work by placing Homework Zone, Minds at Work, and Passing Zone signs on tables or posted on walls adjacent to different areas.

Distribute relevant materials in the different Zones.

- **Homework Zone:** General supplies and references for homework support, including math reference books, textbooks, and calculators, pencils, pens, and paper. For Homework Tracker sessions, you will also need a calendar for the tracker and assignment books for students who have trouble keeping track of assignments.
- **Passing Zone:** SAT, test preparation, and study skills books, test-taking tips, index cards for making flash cards, paper, pencils, highlighters, textbooks, Clinic handouts, etc.
- **Minds at Work:** Writing and grammar guides, bilingual dictionaries, board games, academic and social skills building activities such as GraffitiWall, ELL activities, paper, pens, pencils, and markers. Also provide general reading materials (newspapers, magazines, fiction, nonfiction and poetry books), and art supplies, if available.

### → MATERIALS AND SUPPLIES AT A GLANCE

#### General

- Sign-in logs
- Zone Points cards
- Student Guide to the Zone

#### Homework Zone

- Calculators
- Pencils, pens
- Colored markers, highlighters
- Paper
- Scissors, paper clips, stapler
- Assignment books

#### Passing Zone

- Class textbooks
- Math and language arts resource books
- Study guides
- Handouts with test-taking tips
- Blank forms for class notes
- Index cards, paper, pencils, highlighters, Post-Its
- Clinics and handouts

#### Minds at Work

- Writing and grammar guides
- Bilingual dictionaries
- Board games
- ELL activities
- Paper, pens, pencils, markers
- General reading materials
- GraffitiWall activities
- Art supplies

## Sign-in/sign-out logs

At sign-in, ask students to write:


- Their name and birthday or ID number
- The class or subject they are working on and the name of the teacher assigning homework
- The amount or type of help they would like from a Learning Coach so they can complete the assignment

At sign-out, ask students to think about the work they did, and what they still have to do for longer assignments. Have them check:

- OK if they are OK with their work
- WANT REVIEW if they want more help from the class teacher

Collect the logs, count the number of students attending for the day, and enter it at the bottom.

Share completed sign-out sheets with class teachers. You can post them near teacher mailboxes, put copies in mailboxes, post them on the teachers' Zone bulletin board, or give the log to a school administrator who can follow up with teachers.



The logs provided on CD 1 and 2 serve a purpose beyond tracking attendance.

- The very process of signing in signals that this is a time of transition—a time to refocus and think about planning work time
- Signing out offers students and staff a chance to think about what was accomplished in the time period, and promotes more effective planning
- Logs help staff collect data for evaluation
- When shared with teachers, logs help students get specific help
- Logs show teachers which students are putting in the effort to succeed by attending the Homework Zone



» Sign-in and Sign-out Logs

# MANAGE TRANSITION INTO THE ZONES

In the planning phases, and early in the year, establish processes for students to come into the Homework Zone and transition into work. Talk with students about the purpose of the Homework Zone (time to get schoolwork done), and establish expectations. Explain that they can choose which areas to work in, what they'll work on, and that they can work with friends. Provide a handout outlining expectations and rules (sample Student Guide to the Zone included), and keep it regularly available.

Rowdiness during transitions (and other times!) usually comes from boredom or lack of clarity about what students are supposed to do. As students come into the space, they should immediately see positive things to engage with. Before the Zone opens, set up the spaces with books, materials, supplies and signage. Arrange tables and chairs in the size and configurations of groups you want. Have transition activities posted, or out. Table top activities should need no instruction or guidance. Items for fidgeters or doodlers (e.g., mini play-dough, paper tablecloths and markers, rubrics cubes) should be out on each table.

For older students, the process of signing in may be sufficient for transitioning. Younger students may need more structure and guidance. You can use the Homework Tracker or other group check-in process as a starting point from which students move into work areas. Or, you may post GraffitiWalls or put out, beforehand, quick table-top thinking activities (such brain teasers, logic puzzles, mazes, math games with cards). Establish with the group that the activities run 10 minutes, then have a signal arranged for transitioning into the work Zones. If it is necessary for the Learning Coach to direct students into particular areas or groups, this is the time to do that.

'Zone In' activities provided with the Clinics can be adapted to use as a transition into the work time. These ten-minute full-group activities involve such strategies as posing a 'question of the week,' setting weekly word count targets for brainstorming words off a keyword prompt, and 'one-minute reviews' of music, food, TV shows, or other items.

Transition time into the Zones can also be structured around a student newscast or announcements. Form a committee to serve for a month or more as the newscasters. They are responsible for presenting three or four minutes of announcements, then signaling the move into Zone work. This is a good opportunity to announce Clinic topics, as well.

# DURING HOMEWORK ZONE TIME

## **Circulate and help**

Active, engaged staff are key to effective Homework Zones. If staff are not moving around the room and interacting with students during the whole session, they are serving as monitors, not Learning Coaches. If there is one rule to helping in the Zone, it's "Be there." Learning coaches are visible, available, interested, curious, and ready to help.

Learning Coaches circulate, see what students are working on, and actively offer assistance. They supervise students, of course, but more important, encourage, support, and help.

In the Minds at Work Zone, encourage students writing papers to tell you what the topic is, and what they are writing about. Just summarizing aloud helps students organize their thoughts and their writing.

In the Passing Zone, ask students what they are studying. See if they want you to quiz them or listen to them. Encourage students to work together. Help them find reference materials. If they are struggling with the material, encourage them to talk with their teachers about getting more help.

## **Be aware of who needs help at any given time**

If students seem stuck or frustrated, suggest jump-starts, pointers, or references. See if other students who are working on the same assignment can help. Suggest tutoring if a student is truly struggling. Help students let their teachers know that they'd like more review.

## **Be sensitive to non-native speakers**

English language learners may need help understanding the language of their assignments. They may also want a partner for an English language game or activity, or just want to practice speaking and listening. Offer them these options; they may not know how to ask for support themselves.

## **Organize focused or tutoring support**

In the planning phase, decide how and when focused small group or subject based tutoring will be available. As you circulate in the Zone, encourage students who need more focused support to move into small groups for tutoring.

## **Make use of students' strengths or desire to be of help**

There are a number of ways students can bring their strengths to the Homework Zone. A student can volunteer to be a homework tracker, a peer tutor, or help other students who are struggling with homework assignments.

Students can also work together to prepare activities, which can free up teachers and adult volunteers to assist students working on homework assignments. Make your job easier by giving the students real work to own and design.

# ZONE POINTS AND INCENTIVES

If you are using Zone points cards, stamp or initial students' cards at sign-out, or other agreed-upon time (such as upon completion of assignments, or after a certain time period of work). When students have five stamps, collect the cards and hold them for drawings, or have students accumulate them to turn in for store items or other privileges.

If you're holding drawings, have a student conduct the drawing at an appropriate time during the session, either as a break, a transition, or closing. Schedule them every two weeks or monthly, depending on the age of the students and program resources. Provide as many prizes as resources will allow. Try to come up with some no-cost prizes, such as privileges or extras.

If you have a points "redeeming" incentive system, establish a regular schedule for cash-in time.

## **Stamp**

Depending on the age of students you are working with, you may want to use a stamp system to show work that was done in the Homework Zone. Work is stamped "Work from the Homework Zone" or simply "Homework Zone" or "HWZ." Teachers then see that students are putting in the extra effort of attending the Homework Zone—an indicator of attitude toward school work.

# CONDUCTING LEARNING AND SKILL BUILDING ACTIVITIES DURING HOMEWORK TIME

Structured learning activities and processes in the Homework Zone give students the opportunity to build particular skills. The **Homework Tracker** process is geared to work habits, and getting more homework turned in on time. **Clinics** are focused, 20-minute mini-lessons in study and general academic skills. The **Notes Pool** supports studying for class tests. **Independent learning activities** offer additional skill-building.

## HOMework TRACKER

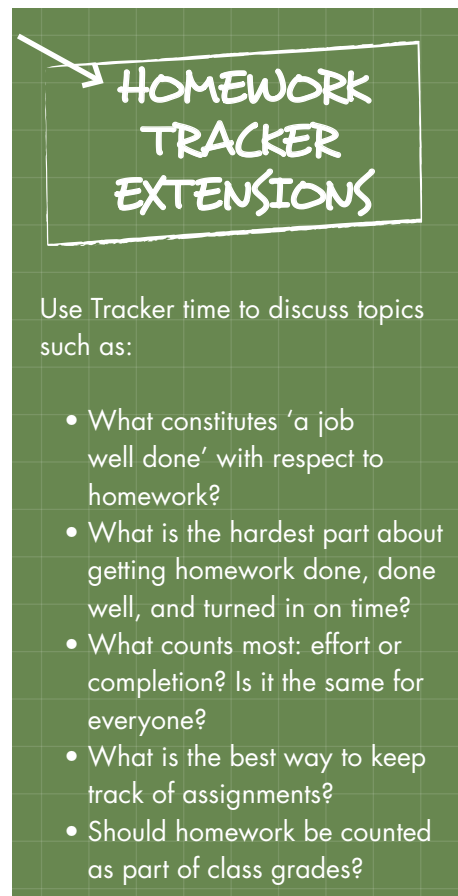
The Homework Tracker helps students:

- Develop the habit of tracking assignments and upcoming tests
- Develop time management skills
- Identify learning supports
- Turn in more assignments, on time

The Tracker process consists of a group gathering, check-ins about assignments, creating a calendar with due dates for longer-term assignments, then breaking into small groups to work. While it works best in a group of consistent attendees, it can also be adapted to drop-in programs. Learning Coaches can tap this time to see which students need which kinds of support and whether some students would benefit from being given assignment books. Coaches can also facilitate discussions to help students think through work habits.

### Supplies

Calendar (with enough space to write lists)  
Assignment books or note pads (for students who have trouble tracking assignments)



Use Tracker time to discuss topics such as:

- What constitutes 'a job well done' with respect to homework?
- What is the hardest part about getting homework done, done well, and turned in on time?
- What counts most: effort or completion? Is it the same for everyone?
- What is the best way to keep track of assignments?
- Should homework be counted as part of class grades?



## Steps

1. Convene the group at the beginning of homework time (students can run this themselves, once they have the pattern). Allocate 10 to 15 minutes.
2. Conduct a check-in go-around, asking:
  - what students have for assignments
  - whether anyone has long-term projects
  - whether any tests are coming up in any classes or in the school
  - whether long-term assignments have been completed and turned in

This allows the Coach to see which students are keeping track of things, and who needs help. It also shows whether students understand and can explain their assignments—a first step in doing them well. Students in the same class should have the same homework. Asking the group as a whole helps prevent the false “none” response.

If students truly do not have homework, ask them to plan what they will do during the time. Suggest reading, studying for tests, working on long-term assignments, tutoring, board games or activities such as GraffitiWall.

3. A student volunteer Tracker keeps a group calendar, and reminds people when due dates or tests are coming up. Participants should tell the Tracker when they want to be reminded. Every day? Two days before it is due? The day before it is due? Trackers give reminders at check in, and note when long-term assignments have been completed. (The Tracker role can be switched monthly.)
4. The Coach points out resources relevant to the assignments, and asks if anyone wants to work in groups.
5. Students with the same or similar assignments may choose to work together. If students are comfortable with one another, ask if anyone wants more help, and form groups or offer support accordingly.
6. Circulate as students work on homework or assignments. If you use a system of stamping homework as “Work from the Homework Zone” or similar, stamp as appropriate.

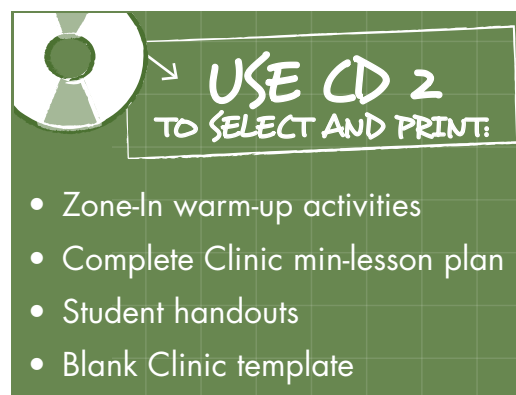
# CLINICS

Just as athletes use intensive clinics to sharpen particular, specific skills like dribbling, a backhand swing, or catching, so can students. Offer 20-minute skills Clinics as a short pick-up or practice for test-taking techniques, reading comprehension, listening to lectures, or solving logic problems. Time-limiting them (and sticking to it) makes it a manageable chunk.

Clinic min-lessons, complete with warm-up activity, step-by-step lesson plan, and handouts, are provided on CD 2. A template is also provided for making your own Clinics tailored to your students, their needs, and particular school work. Share the Clinics and template with classroom teachers, and ask for suggestions about other topics or skills to include. Once students are familiar with the Clinic format, you may ask them to choose topics or skills.

To make the most of Clinics:

- Prepare all handouts in advance
- Select topics in advance
- Post the topic (you can make a table top sign, as well)
- Announce the Clinic at the opening of the Homework Zone
- Tell students space is limited, and they need to sign up



At the designated time, announce the start of the Clinic. Begin no more than five minutes later. When the Clinic is over, collect the Clinic sign-in sheets and record the number of students who attended.

It is helpful for classroom teachers to know that their students are attending Clinics. Post the attendance sheet on the teacher's Zone Bulletin board, send periodic updates, or sign or stamp student work and suggest that students hand it in. It is important that students making the extra effort get the recognition they deserve—this serves as a motivator for students, as well.

***See the Clinics on CD 2 for details.***

# NOTES POOL

Class note-taking is a skill that needs to be developed—it is not automatically done well. Note-taking helps students retain information, and provides a basis for studying for tests. Organizing a Notes Pool in the Passing Zone addresses both needs.

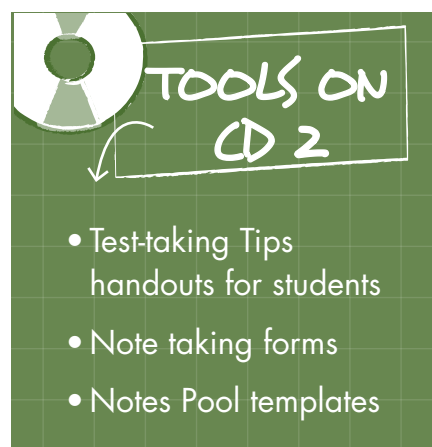
Students and teachers contribute notes to the Notes Pool. Other students can copy the notes, or use them for studying. Recopying notes, or adding to one's own notes, is one strategy for reviewing and retaining information. Absolutely do not allow Xeroxing! Notes can only be copied by hand. This reinforces the information, and stops the idea that students don't need to take notes in class (or attend!) because they can get the notes in the Homework Zone. The Pool does, however, help students catch up who were legitimately absent.

To create a Notes Pool, you'll need:

- Copies of the Notes Pool form (included on CD 2).
- A large envelope for teachers to contribute study notes. This can go on the Zone Bulletin Board for teachers.
- A binder with pockets or a set of files to serve as the Notes Pool.

Encourage students to contribute notes to the Pool as a way to help them study, review, and clarify points. Offer incentives to encourage contributions. Review student notes to be sure they are clear and correct.

Compile student-contributed notes and teacher-contributed notes in a large binder, accordion files, envelope, or similar. Label the binder or files with the name of the class or subject area. Be sure notes are labeled as provided by teachers or students.



# INDEPENDENT LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Use Homework Zone time to encourage independent activities that are mentally challenging and skill building.

Create a **Minds at Work Zone** for students working on:

- Research papers
- Writing assignments
- Service learning journals
- Senior projects
- Committees

Provide basics of paper, pens and file folder, as well as relevant supplies geared to the age and interests of the students, such as:

- English course textbooks and readings
- Assigned readings
- Newspapers and magazines
- Readings of different genres (fiction, non-fiction, poetry, drama)
- Guides to writing research papers, such as *Write Your Research Report*, *A Real-Time Guide*
- Dictionaries, bilingual dictionaries, thesaurus
- Computers with internet access

**Add activities** such as:

- Chess
- Uno, Yahtzee or other number and probability games
- Math-based card games
- Spatial strategy games such as Blokus
- GraffitiWall
- Art supplies
- Brain teasers, word puzzles

Ask students for suggestions, and refresh periodically.

## Committees

Consider adding committees and committee time to the Homework Zone. Committees can manage some of the day-to-day operations, or can take on special projects, for example:

- Snack
- Manage games and supplies, including budgeting, selecting, and ordering
- Oversee incentive activities, such as selecting and ordering incentive items for drawings or for the store, collecting points cards, setting schedules, and conducting activities
- Plan and execute special events, such as end-of-year celebrations
- Organize and implement a guest speaker series
- Plan field trips
- Research and present on different college options, with pros and cons, student views, financial information, and requirements

## SUPPORTING INDEPENDENT LEARNING

- Make materials and supplies available
- Ask students what they are working on
- Show students the books and materials available
- Offer to be an active listener and critical friend for writing projects
- Discuss service learning experiences
- Encourage students to explore reading materials
- Check in on committee work progress; ask if there are aspects needing help
- Show students how to play the games; encourage students to teach and challenge each other
- Ask students to bring in or suggest materials

## Projects

Learning Coaches can support projects that students bring in to the Homework Zone, and can launch projects, as well. In a drop-in program, projects help retain students and expand the learning opportunities. Projects may include:

- Film club
- Service learning through peer tutoring or support
- Independent study projects on topics or experiences of the students' choice
- Poster or other contests for recruitment into the Homework Zone or other activities
- Construction or science projects
- Educational software review and selection
- Global learning websites with reviews
- Art, music, and media productions

## Homework Contracts

Homework contracts help students reflect on their learning, and structure commitments to working and developing skills. They serve as a reference point for Coaches, and can guide periodic check-ins and reviews. If you use contracts, be sure to follow up at designated times.

Contracts should be filled in by the student, with Learning Coach participation and support. They may be developed between Learning Coaches and all students, or only some students. They may also be set up to involve agreements with parents and with teachers. Including parents and teachers has the strong advantage of setting individualized objectives based on the learning needs of the student, and correspondingly clarifying expectations among all stakeholders. Will homework be started or completed, in some subjects or all? Should the goal or objective be increasing the amount of focused time on homework, turning in more, or being able to work in groups on projects?

*See the contract template on the CD 1 for an example.*

### PROJECT RESOURCE FROM THE CENTER

Based on a project conducted across 30 Philadelphia, PA high schools, the Center for Afterschool Education created *Celebrate Success RFP Project: English and Math in Practice*. Students write and submit for approval a full proposal and budget to secure program funds for an end-of-year celebration. Programs provide funding from existing 'event' funding, tied to program attendance. The project builds the skills to prepare students for applying for grants from a variety of youth-grant making organizations. The step-by-step guide shows how to organize and run the project with middle and high school students.

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# HELPING IN THE HOMEWORK ZONES

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*"The teachers really care about us learning." – Homework Zone Student*

MINDS  
AT  
WORK

Passing Zone  
Area

Minds at Work Area

HOME  
WORK  
ZONE

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Homework  
Zone Area

PASSING  
ZONE

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ZON

GraffitiWalls hung up on the walls

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# INTRODUCTION

Learning Coaches help students build a range of skills at all times during the Homework Zone program. They act as much more than homework time supervisors struggling to keep kids quiet and out of trouble. They actively help students build skills for success in school.

## Fundamental: Start with Trust and Caring

Students need to trust the staff, know that the adults believe in them, and see high expectations coupled with caring in action. This demands that staff sincerely respect students, and truly care about their success. If staff members act disrespectfully, look bored, or spend the bulk of their time goofing off or talking to each other, they are not right for the job, and will adversely impact the kids. Replace them.

Some adults are naturals. Kids gravitate to them. Others may genuinely care about and respect the students, but have a harder time showing it. Here are some tips and techniques.

- Be a good listener. As culturally appropriate, use eye contact, nodding, and follow-up questions to show you are listening with interest.
- Be aware of what students are talking about and watching on TV and in movies. You don't need to pretend to 'be a kid,' but you should be reasonably up to date with kid jargon and hot topics and characters—respectfully.
- Be yourself, or what one educator refers to as "a real model, not a role model." Share your enthusiasms and interests. Model in your own behavior the kind of behavior and respect you expect kids to show themselves and each other.
- Offer help at the level you can. Never be afraid to say "I don't know," "Why don't you ask...", or "Let's take a look at ...." Such responses not only encourage trust and openness, but also offer a valuable lesson for students: No one knows everything, and there are ways to find answers.
- Actively help students find the supports they need. Connect them with other resources. While boundaries are necessary, show that your caring is not limited by your job description.
- Recognize success and accomplishment sincerely. Encourage effort, and never make fun of answers or honest attempts.

## Provide the Appropriate Level of Help

Helping with homework is not the same as doing it, nor is it the same as tutoring. The main goal is to help students do their own work.

Good Learning Coaches:

- Encourage students to do their work, attend Clinics, and get tutoring if needed
- Ask questions to help students think through their assignments
- Help students get "unstuck"
- Sit with students to review and talk about their work
- Help students develop questions to ask their teachers
- Communicate with class teachers about problem areas
- Be aware of the different types of help specific students require
- Encourage students to help each other
- Notice and try to accommodate different work, study, and learning styles

### → HELPFUL QUESTIONS

- What is the assignment? Explain it.
- Where do you write your assignments?
- When is it due?
- Have you done something like this before?
- Do you want to use the reference books to obtain more information?
- Do you need supplies?

# STUDY SKILLS AND BASIC HELP

During homework time, provide supports that build students' work, study, and general school skills. Most students need these work and learning skills; some need focused content support. Some may need content support in some areas or subjects and not others. Try to distinguish which students need what.

Build good learning and work habits among all students.

- Help students learn to keep track of assignments. You may do this on an individual basis, or use processes such as the Homework Tracker.
- Make assignment books available, as possible, or remind students to set up a clearly marked area in their notebooks for writing assignments.
- Reinforce calendar-keeping for assignments and long term projects. This can also be part of a group process through the Homework Tracker.
- Regularly check to be sure students understand their assignments. Individually or as part of groups, ask students to explain their assignments and what they are working on. Articulating assignments helps students focus and think through what they need to do.
- Help students find information. Direct them to references or web sites.
- Ask students to explain their thinking, and the steps they're taking.
- Check to see students have the supplies they need to complete their work.

## START RIGHT

Don't tell a student an assignment is easy or hard before they start working. Instead, ask if they have ever done anything like it before, or ask if the assignment reminds them of other assignments or class work.

## MODEL THINKING HABITS

Talk to students about topics, readings, or assignments. Ask who, what, when, where, why, how questions.

What are the main points?  
What did the teacher say in class about this?  
Who else talked about it?  
Do you have notes?

Model the types of questions students should ask themselves as they work on assignments.

What is being asked?  
What is expected?  
What is the main point or purpose?  
How much time do you have?

## Class note-taking

Students need to learn to take good class notes. As you circulate around the room, observe students' notes from class. Offer tips about ways to take notes, organize them, and use them. Help students understand that good notes are a valuable resource when it comes time to do homework, review, or study for tests.

Remind students that they can learn good note-taking techniques. Find models of good notes in the Notes Pool, and remind students to attend Clinics focused on acquiring good note-taking techniques. Encourage students to write up their notes and contribute them to the Notes Pool in the Passing Zone.

## LEVELS OF HELP

### **"I do, you watch."**

The Coach gives step-by-step instructions and shows what to do while the student watches.

### **"I do, you help."**

Coach and student work together, with the Coach giving a lot of guidance. The Coach may do some of the first steps, then give hints as the student finishes.

### **"You do, I help."**

Students work in pairs or small groups with the Coach circulating and offering to show how to do something or help a little. Coaches ask students questions about what they are doing.

### **"You do, I watch."**

Students complete the work independently, with the Coach available for praise and encouragement.

(Adapted from the work of P. David Pearson, Center for the Study of Reading,  
University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign)

## Study and test-taking practice

Use homework time to also build students' confidence and test taking skills. Ask whether students have tests coming up, and help them help each other to study.

- Create study groups with set time limits and specific tasks (e.g., 30 minutes for making test prep questions) to demonstrate how to make studying manageable
- Form peer groups for students to quiz each other
- Help students identify the types of questions and subject content they need to practice
- Show students how to make flash cards
- Suggest ways for students to review, such as highlighting class notes, recopying notes, making cards with key points, and coming up with memorization tricks
- Provide handouts (samples provided on this CD) with test-taking tips and test-practice; the more familiar students are with test taking and formats, the more they can focus on content
- Guide students to test prep materials, such as books, sample tests, and websites
- Make handouts available with test information (dates, types of questions, and what tests will cover)
- Provide copies of past tests for practice
- Provide SAT guidebooks

## IN THE PASSING ZONE

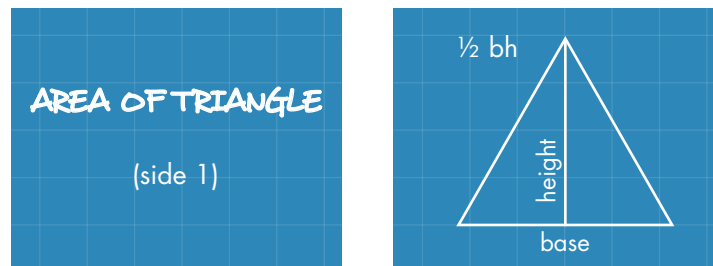
- Make study and test prep materials and supplies available
- Ask what students are working on
- Ask students if they want to practice with a partner
- Offer to ask students questions, to practice with them, or serve as timekeeper
- Give students ideas about how to study
- Show students the books and handouts available
- Organize and give timed-practice SAT tests for interested students
- Encourage students to sign up for Clinics

For PSAT, SAT, and state tests, provide test-specific information as much as possible. If it is not provided by the school, find information about your state's standardized tests on the state's Department of Education website (go to [ed.gov/about/contacts/state](http://ed.gov/about/contacts/state) for a link to your state). Most sites offer detailed information about the test, along with sample tests or examples of tests from previous years. A few weeks before testing, run Clinics that relate to standardized tests and encourage students to attend.

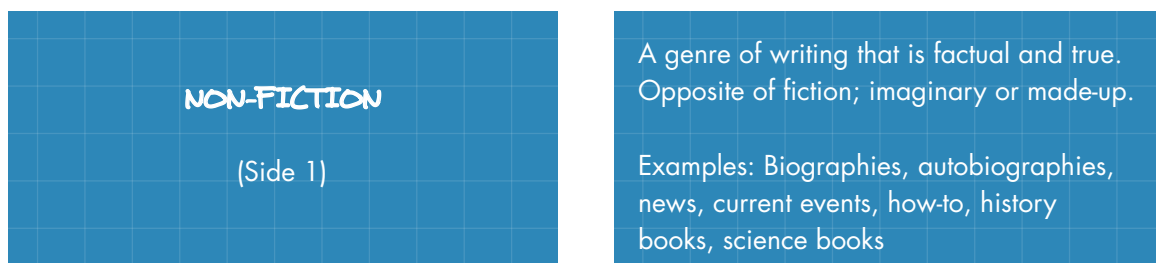
### **Study technique: flash cards**

Encourage students to make flash cards and use them to study for class tests. Flash cards can be made and used in different ways. Avoid using pre-made cards—the process of creating the cards helps students become familiar with the information. Students improve their independent learning skills each time they decide which information to include on their cards.

Example: Write a formula on one side and what the formula represents on the other. See below:



Example: Write a word on one side and its definition on the other. See below:



Students can use flash cards to quiz themselves, or work with a partner. One student can read one side of the flash card, with the partner providing the answer on the other side. Encourage students to get creative with cards and studying. They can make up Jeopardy-type games where the answer is given and they need to guess the question, or Concentration or other card and memory games.

### **Study technique: self-testing**

Have students make up test questions based on their class material, and then test themselves and each other.

Example: Write a sentence or two, then turn it into a “fill in the blank” test question.

Sentence: Fiction is a genre of writing that is imaginary or made-up. Novels are fiction.

Test question: \_\_\_\_\_ is a genre of writing that is \_\_\_\_\_ or made up.  
Novels are \_\_\_\_\_.

Example: create question-and-answer pair cards.

Write questions on five index cards. Write the answers on five other index cards. Mix up the cards and then try to match the questions with the answers. Or, have one student read the answer with another guessing the question, or have one student ask the question and the other student answer it.

### **Study technique: Talk it out**

Talking about ideas can help students study. Ask students to explain concepts or formulas. If they are studying for a test on a specific reading, ask them to summarize it. Pinpoint the main idea, express their opinions about it, or discuss the story’s characters and setting.

## ↓ FORMS ON CD 2 TO HELP WITH TEST PREPARATION

**“Taking Tests” Handouts** test prep tips for Multiple Choice, Fill-in-the-blank, True/False, Matching, and Essay tests (one for each)

**SAT/ACT Information Q & A** to help Coaches strategize

**SAT/ACT Tips for Students** practical advice to improve performance and raise scores

**Notes Pool forms** so teachers and students can share notes

**Tips for Students** explains how to take better notes and thoroughly prepare for tests

# HELPING WITH ENGLISH

To succeed in school, students must read, write, listen, and speak English well. Clinics and activities in the Minds at Work Zone support English language skills. Structure time and activities deliberately to include:

- Reading comprehension and reading skills, including pre-reading, reading closely, and summarizing the main points
- Writing skills: forming ideas, pre-writing, organizing information, drafting, writing, and proofreading
- Speaking to groups and making presentations
- Finding information
- Note-taking

## Talk and listen

Talking and listening build skills. As you work with students, encourage them to talk and write about their lives, interests, and experiences. Talk about your own ideas, life experiences, or books or magazines you've read, are reading, or want to read. Ask students to recommend books, stories, articles, plays, or movies.

Make a wide range of reading materials available—comic books, game manuals, sports scores, magazines, song lyrics, movie and music reviews. Talk about them with students; encourage students to talk with each other.

## Reading and writing help

A good learning Coach can help students with reading and writing, even without being an English teacher. In language skills development, practice is essential. Young people learn to read and write better by reading and writing more. They learn to listen and speak better by listening and speaking more and by learning to do so more carefully.

As you walk around the Homework Zone, create opportunities for practice and skill-building. Remind students who may be struggling with heavy reading, research, and homework loads that they can learn helpful reading techniques. Remember: the more you help students handle their reading, the more you will help them be successful in school.

## Help with fiction

Help students read and understand fiction by helping them see and explain the key elements of a fictional story: characters, plot, setting (time and place), and theme. Most English classes and tests require students to use this terminology and to identify these elements.

To foster discussion, use who, what, when, where, and why questions. For example:

- Characters = Who. Ask students to name the main characters and the supporting characters. Who would they want as a friend? As a boyfriend, girlfriend, parent, or teacher? Who do they dislike? Why?
- Story or plot = What. Have students summarize what happened and/or what they think will happen.

- Setting = When and where. Ask students to describe the setting (time and place), and the timeline of events (what happened before, what happened next, what happened later).
- Theme = Why. Ask students why things happened the way they did, why characters did what they did, and why it matters. Does the theme relate to anything they know? For example, if the theme is greed or jealousy, do they know of other stories, movies, or music with the same theme?

## Help with non-fiction

Much of the reading for school is non-fiction—textbooks, periodicals, or reference materials for writing research papers. This type of reading is very different than reading a novel, adventure story, or comic book. To help students work with this kind of reading, share these pointers:

- Read the title, cover, back cover, and table of contents. Know what the topic is.
- Start by skimming for the main points.
- It's OK to continue to skim parts and read the most important parts more closely.
- Look at the introduction. Does it seem to summarize the book?
- Skim headings and subheadings of each chapter.
- For research, know what you are looking for. Dates? Names? Definitions? Certain types of information often look different. They are numbers, words in italics or bold, elements that are set apart, or boxed information.
- Look at pictures, diagrams, tables, and charts, and read the captions.
- Read the introduction and conclusion of each chapter.
- Summarize the main point of each chapter aloud.
- Take notes on the reading (highlight or make margin notes if the book belongs to you). Write notes of the topic, main ideas or key concepts, essential dates and names, significant details, examples, and thoughts or reactions.

## TIPS FOR COACHES AND STUDENTS

### WHAT MAKES A GOOD READER?

**Struggling readers often think reading is about sounding out words. Help readers understand that strong readers use several techniques everyone can learn.**

Good readers:

- **GET READY** to read by looking at the title, table of contents, and pictures to get an idea of what's coming. Show students how to get an idea of what the material is about. Ask what they think the topic is; ask what they know about it.
- **SKIP WORDS** they don't know and read on for more clues. Help by encouraging students to guess a word's meaning from the rest of the sentence or the paragraph (called guessing the meaning from context). They can go back later if necessary.
- **RE-READ** when things don't make sense. Help by offering to read together with the students.
- **GO FOR THE OVERALL MEANING** rather than stopping at each word. Help by reminding students to summarize the main ideas and points at the end of sections.

## Help with vocabulary

Help readers sound out words and guess meanings of unfamiliar words. To help with guessing meanings, encourage students to think about the context, and what the word is likely to mean. Depending on the word, suggest breaking it into parts—prefix, root, suffix.

For example, point out that in the word “manageable” they see the root ‘manage,’ as in management and managing. Don’t break the flow of reading, but at an appropriate time, ask what other words could be built on ‘manage.’ Remind students of the meaning of prefix (before) and suffix (an ending), and specifics such as ‘un’ meaning ‘not’ yielding ‘unmanageable’ from the root word. Play games of giving a root word, like ‘friend’, and seeing how many words the group or a student can build off of it (e.g., friendly, unfriendly, friendliness).

Encourage students to write words they want to learn on flashcards. Help students learn how to find definitions and to study together. Offer Clinics on using the dictionary and thesaurus and on building vocabulary, and encourage students to attend.

Play games that involve words and meanings, such as crossword puzzles, Scrabble, Boggle, and a variety of puzzles and guessing games.

## Writing in the Homework Zone

In the Homework Zone, deliberately boost students’ facility with writing and the writing process. Several Clinics focus on writing, and the Zone In warm-up activities at the beginning of each Clinic are designed to help build writing skills. (The One-Minute Review, Free Write and Question of the Week Zone In activities, for example, help students with summarizing, separating fact and opinion, organizing and presenting information, and persuasive speaking.) As you work with students in the Homework Zone, help students:

- Come up with ideas and get them on paper
- Move from an idea to a topic
- Organize what they want to say
- Do research
- Proofread
- Write more quickly
- Communicate more clearly in words

## Active help with writing

Like reading, writing improves with practice. Students must know how to take notes while listening, how to get thoughts on a page quickly and clearly, and how to research and write a paper. They have to write essays, short stories, poems, business letters, and resumes. To write well, the primary skills are thinking, organizing, and vocabulary, supported by a good base in grammar. Good writers should have a command of spelling and punctuation, and know good strategies for getting help with this (such as proofreaders and computer programs).



Remember that more reading also supports better writing. Through reading, students become familiar with vocabulary, syntax, and the use of writing as a tool of powerful communication. Speaking and listening skills developed through structured activities deliberately targeting these skills, also support writing. To make an effective presentation, or to speak clearly, students need to organize their thoughts, choose appropriate vocabulary, and determine the flow and length to make the point. These skills are also needed in writing.

A large part of students' reluctance and fears about writing comes from starting. Moving from a blank piece of paper to a finished document can seem like such a huge task that it becomes paralyzing. Help students get started by asking them to do the following:

- State the assignment clearly
- Explain expectations in terms of length, topic, and due date
- Explain expectations in terms of content
- State the topic (if it is given) aloud in one sentence

Make a writing assignment more manageable by breaking it into steps. With students, look at each of the following stages:

- Pre-writing: Students can try pre-writing techniques like brainstorming (list anything possible) or free-writing (write for two minutes about anything that is triggered by the topic).
- Narrowing down the topic: Help students narrow it to something more manageable.
- Organizing ideas: Encourage students to outline their ideas in any form they choose.

As students get started and into a writing project, ask what types of help or support they might like. Suggest appropriate resources. Encourage students to work with each other, and encourage communication with teachers as much as possible.

## HELPING STRATEGIES: → WRITING

Ask students what kind of help they would like.

- Do they want help with ideas or organizing thoughts? Ask students to talk through their ideas with you, and give feedback.
- Grammar? Have students read writing aloud. Often grammatical errors can be heard. Point out grammar guides, and form writing pairs for reviewing.
- Spelling help can come from spell checkers on computers, skilled student proofreaders, or dictionaries.
- For finding information, point out to students reference materials and resources, and suggest websites.
- To help with clarity, form pairs or small groups of students as 'critical friends' to listen to each others' work read aloud.

## Moving forward with writing

Once students complete a draft, help them review and polish their writing. Effective techniques include:

- Ask students to summarize the draft for you.
- Ask them to read it to you. By reading aloud, students often discover skipped words or jumbled sentences. Ask if they want to add anything.
- Read the work for meaning, not grammar or spelling. See if it says what the student intended. If not, tell the student what you didn't understand and ask for clarification.
- Remind students to review it themselves, share it with friends or others, or ask their teachers for help finalizing it.
- Encourage, express interest, and discuss their work with them. Relate the work to other things they do or know and other things you've read or know.

## READING AND WRITING WEBSITES

The following sites offer references and resources for reading and writing.

### Students

[www.english-zone.com](http://www.english-zone.com)  
[www.highschoolhub.org/hub/hub.cfm](http://www.highschoolhub.org/hub/hub.cfm)  
[www.thesaurus.com](http://www.thesaurus.com)  
[www.dictionary.com](http://www.dictionary.com)  
[www.owl.english.purdue.edu/sitemap.html](http://www.owl.english.purdue.edu/sitemap.html)  
[www.learnhowtowrite.com/activeverbs.html](http://www.learnhowtowrite.com/activeverbs.html)

### Teachers

[www.literacyconnections.com](http://www.literacyconnections.com)  
[www.ala.org](http://www.ala.org)  
[www.ed.gov/americareads](http://www.ed.gov/americareads)  
[www.literacycenter.net](http://www.literacycenter.net)  
[www.2.nypl.org/home/branch/kids](http://www.2.nypl.org/home/branch/kids)  
[www.mcrel.org/standards-benchmarks](http://www.mcrel.org/standards-benchmarks)  
[www.ipl.org/div/aplus/](http://www.ipl.org/div/aplus/)  
[www.academicinfo.net/engwrite.html](http://www.academicinfo.net/engwrite.html)

# HELPING ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

As the population of the United States becomes more diverse, languages other than English become part of our daily lives. Students are considered English language learners (ELL) or English as a second language (ESL) students if English is not their native language, or if the dominant language in their home is not English. English language learners may be immigrants, refugees, or native-born Americans. They may speak and understand English well, but be unable to read or write it. They may have a great deal of schooling in their home language, but little in English. They may succeed academically in their own language, but fail when they need to use English.

Fluent academic English is necessary for school success in the United States. It is not uncommon for children and young people to speak and understand English well, yet be unable to do schoolwork effectively in English. Learning to speak, listen and understand, read, and write, happens in stages, and these skills develop at different rates. Social English usually develops fairly quickly (taking about a year), especially among children and young people. Academic English—the ability to read school material, understand classes, participate in discussions, and write reports—usually takes much longer (often five to seven years).

## → RESOURCE FROM THE CENTER FOR AFTERSCHOOL EDUCATION

*More Than Just Talk: English Language Learning in Afterschool* provides staff with the basics of language acquisition and language learning, along with ready-to-use activities to build English language skills. Activities and templates on the CD allow quick tailoring to fit your learners and their levels, and the Learner Portfolio helps focus learning and document progress.

Use *More Than Just Talk* to:

- Develop a positive English language learning environment
- Quickly create activities for students of all grades and levels
- Use a Language Learner Portfolio to show progress
- Lead staff training in English language learning in afterschool
- Support staff in their work with language learners

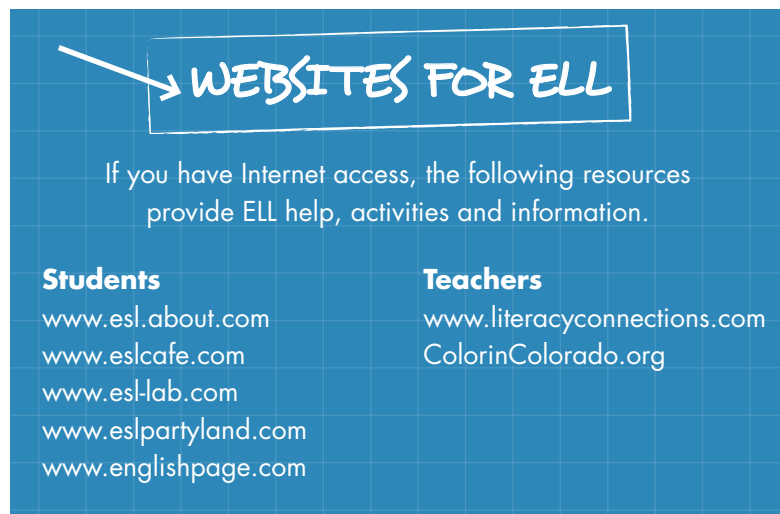
To order or learn more, go to [www.afterschooled.org](http://www.afterschooled.org)

You can help by understanding what to expect from English language learners and by supporting English language development. These tips can help.

- Speak clearly and in a normal tone of voice.
- Be sensitive to each student's level of understanding.
- Expect grammatical errors and do not correct them in conversation.
- Talk about different things, like places, movies, food, music, hobbies, and family.
- Encourage conversations about daily life or student activities and tasks.
- Encourage students to talk about their families, backgrounds, and culture. Ask them about their home language and have them teach you some words and phrases.
- Use actions, illustration, facial expressions, visual aids, and demonstrations to aid understanding.
- Address everyone when working with a group of students. Don't single out students who are not fluent in English.

Students who are learning English may be shy about talking. Make them feel comfortable by:

- Letting them finish what they are saying
- Responding to the meaning of what is being said, not the way it was said
- Being patient! Remember that learning a language is difficult



**→ WEBSITES FOR ELL**

If you have Internet access, the following resources provide ELL help, activities and information.

<b>Students</b>	<b>Teachers</b>
<a href="http://www.esl.about.com">www.esl.about.com</a>	<a href="http://www.literacyconnections.com">www.literacyconnections.com</a>
<a href="http://www.eslcafe.com">www.eslcafe.com</a>	<a href="http://ColorinColorado.org">ColorinColorado.org</a>
<a href="http://www.esl-lab.com">www.esl-lab.com</a>	
<a href="http://www.eslpartyland.com">www.eslpartyland.com</a>	
<a href="http://www.englishpage.com">www.englishpage.com</a>	

# HELPING WITH MATH

Many Learning Coaches question their ability to help students with math. While it is helpful for staff to feel comfortable with math, even Coaches who aren't math teachers can help students succeed.

Work on math homework requires the same study and work skills as other subjects: understanding the problem and the expectations, breaking the process into steps, relating it to things already known, focus, and knowing when and how to seek help.

When working with students on math problems, ask students to explain both the problem and the processes they're using to solve the problem. If this proves difficult, offer the following suggestions, as relevant.

- Simplify the problem
- Make a list, chart, or graph
- Draw a diagram
- Look for a pattern
- Work backwards
- Use a process of elimination
- Act out or model the problem with objects
- Guess and check

Consider these strategies:

- Ask students to explain answers. Always check if students really understand what they are doing.
- Listen for math anxiety statements like, "I can't do this" or "Math isn't my thing." To help ease the anxiety, be positive, encouraging, and helpful. Provide resources, extra time, and skilled support.
- If an answer is wrong, help the student figure it out and see where they went in the wrong direction.
- Give specific positive feedback or encouragement.
- Be patient!
- Direct students to helpful texts such as *Math on Call for basic math*, *Algebra to Go for algebra*, *Geometry to Go for geometry*, or other good resources.

## HELP STUDENTS WITH MATH PROBLEMS GET "UNSTUCK"

Begin by asking students to describe the problem. Ask students to:

### **Explain the problem in words**

What is the problem asking? Is it like other problems you've encountered?

### **Write the problem in different ways**

Is there another way to write that?

### **Break the problem into smaller parts or steps**

What steps are you going to take?

### **Guess, estimate, and explain**

What do you think the answer might be?  
How did you determine that?

### **Try different ways**

What have you tried?  
Are there other alternatives?

### **Explain what they don't understand and isolate the difficulty**

What do you think about your answer?  
Where are you getting stuck?

### **Figure out how to get help**

Where can you go to find an explanation?  
Who can you ask?

Form math study and homework groups with students working on similar problems. Be sure students have their textbooks, and other resources to help them complete their work, such as calculators or graph paper. Recruit peer tutors to serve as resources to small groups.



Routinely put out math-based games such as Yahtzee, Uno, Blockus (a spatial reasoning game), and chess (a strategic thinking game). Countless card games involve skills from simple calculation all the way through complex probabilities. Simple number games and puzzles played with cards 1 through 9 are included on the Homework Zone CD 2, and the GraffitiWall includes some math, spatial, and geometry activities.

A graphic on a blue grid background. At the top, the text 'MATH WEBSITES' is written in a white, hand-drawn font inside a white rectangular box. Below the box, the text 'If you have Internet access, the following sites are resources for math help and information:' is written in white. Below this text, there are two columns of website addresses. The left column is headed 'Students' and lists 'www.mathforum.org', 'www.math.com', and 'www.coolmath.com'. The right column is headed 'Teachers' and lists 'www.enc.org', 'www.standards.nctm.org', and 'www.mcrel.org/standards-benchmarks'. White arrows point from the 'Students' and 'Teachers' headings to their respective lists of websites.

# TUTORING

Tutoring provides subject-specific, focused help for students who need it. Subject teachers, college students, or advanced peers may serve as tutors working one-on-one or with small groups.

Recruit tutors who:

- Know what kind of help is needed
- Are familiar with the types of assignments students will have
- Feel comfortable with the material and type of help expected
- Know what resources are available

If possible, provide tutoring within the larger Homework Zone space. This allows students to remain part of the whole group, helping remove stigmas attached to needing or getting more help. Try to establish a consistent schedule for tutoring, and be sure students know when it is available so they can plan their time accordingly. Depending on tutoring resources, you may schedule by grade and day (for example, Monday 9th grade, Tuesday 10th), or by subject (Monday math, Tuesday English).

Encourage students who need tutoring to sign up. Create groups of up to five students who have the same needs, while still accommodating those students who may need one-on-one help in certain subjects or with specific assignments.

## **Tutor training and orientation**

Be sure tutors participate in an orientation to the Homework Zone, and provide guidance for their role as tutors. You may create a folder for each tutor with Tutor Tips (on this CD) and the Student Guide to the Homework Zone, along with the program schedule and any other relevant information.

Positive relationships are fundamental to learning. In the tutoring relationship, tutors should:

- Learn students' first and last names and correct spelling
- Pay attention when students talk, and respond appropriately
- Be positive, reasonable, and sensitive to strengths and weaknesses
- Challenge students to stretch, but not to the point of discouragement
- Be clear that students can ask questions
- Never make fun of a student's work
- Be human! Acknowledge mistakes, and correct them
- Be honest. If tutors don't know something, their job is to help figure out how to get the information, explanations, or support needed

As tutors work with students, their core responsibilities are:

- Set goals with the students—identify short-term achievable goals, and build to more long-term challenging goals
- Plan the strategy for working
- Review and maintain an overview what the student knows and where there are gaps
- Clarify the assignments
- Get needed resources
- Be a guide, not an answer key. Help work out problems—don't just give answers
- Be willing to try different approaches if one way is not working
- Use a do-review-revise-finish process, when possible



## **Web Resources**

### **General Homework Websites for All Students**

[www.sparknotes.com](http://www.sparknotes.com)  
[www.historychannel.com](http://www.historychannel.com)  
[www.mathforum.org/dr.math](http://www.mathforum.org/dr.math)  
[www.lii.org](http://www.lii.org)  
[www.encyclopedia.msn.com](http://www.encyclopedia.msn.com)  
[www.homeworkspot.com](http://www.homeworkspot.com)

### **Study Skills Websites**

[www.math.com/students/advice.html](http://www.math.com/students/advice.html)  
[www.educationworld.com/students/study](http://www.educationworld.com/students/study)

### **Reading and Writing Websites**

[www.english-zone.com](http://www.english-zone.com)  
[www.literacyconnections.com](http://www.literacyconnections.com) (for teachers)

### **Math Websites**

#### ***For Students***

[www.mathforum.org](http://www.mathforum.org)  
[www.math.com](http://www.math.com)  
[www.coolmath.com](http://www.coolmath.com)

#### ***For Teachers***

[www.mcrel.org/standards-benchmarks](http://www.mcrel.org/standards-benchmarks)

### **Websites for ESL**

[www.eslcafe.com](http://www.eslcafe.com)  
[www.literacyconnections.com](http://www.literacyconnections.com) (for teachers)

### **Writing Websites**

[www.home.earthlink.net/~tcwrites](http://www.home.earthlink.net/~tcwrites)  
[www.ipl.org/div/aplus](http://www.ipl.org/div/aplus)  
[www.academicinfo.net/engwrite.html](http://www.academicinfo.net/engwrite.html)

\*Websites change often, please use this list as a guide for getting started.